

DON'T OVERCOMPLICATE GOD

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Few if any of us will ever have the opportunity in our lifetimes to enjoy an audience with a king or queen. But if you were ever to be summoned by royalty, you would first be coached on some important protocols for entering into the royal presence.

Twenty feet before the throne, you would be instructed to bow or curtsy, walk briskly into the court, and bow or curtsy again in front of the throne. You would kneel on a cushion and conduct your business, speaking only when spoken to. When the interaction came to a close, you would immediately back away from the king or queen, and twenty feet from the throne you would bow or curtsy once again, then turn around and briskly exit the court.

There are strict limits to royalty access. Generally, you must wait to be specifically summoned; otherwise, you would have to make an appointment and wait until the king or queen was not busy. You often would need an intermediary, such as a herald, to approach the king on your behalf in order to gain access into his presence. Overall it is a very formal and structured affair, all with the view of creating an atmosphere of respect and reverence.

So when it comes to approaching God, the King of all kings, our natural inclination can be to complicate the interaction, to bog down the relationship with a lot of rigmarole and protocol. This is totally understandable. We have been raised in a performance-based society where value comes from achievement and accomplishment. From childhood on, we feel the pressure to make the grade, win the scholarship, get the internship, land the promotion, and earn a decent salary. Everything seems to depend on what we do and how we stack up compared to each other.

We create a lot of hoops to jump through in order to gain His approval, but being human, we will always fail to live up to our own standards and distance ourselves from God as a result. It is easier to avoid Him than to come face-to-face with our inadequacy. We are usually more than aware of our sins and shortcomings, just as much as we are aware of how perfect He is. Human nature almost rejects the notion that we can "come as we are," without a résumé of achievement, without a report card. But this is a godless way of approaching our self-worth since it makes everything about us rather than about Him.

“Whenever our hearts condemn us, [remember] God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” (1 John 3:20, ESV). He knows our personalities, our weaknesses, the situations in which we find ourselves. He sees the big picture and is full of grace and compassion. He doesn’t condemn us; why should we condemn ourselves?

“If our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God” (1 John 3:21). A confident heart does not need to perform. It rests assured in its value as His creation. It lives in the faith of His goodness. It understands God’s acceptance does not depend upon how much we do for Him. It is simply available to us because He is our Father.

We may never entertain royalty on earth, but when holding court with the King of kings, it is not complicated at all. He makes it easy for us:

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:4–5, KJV).